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# FICTIONALITY IN A POSTMODERN NOVELS (BASED ON THE CREATIVITY OF JASPER FFORDE)

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## ABSTRACT

In “The Postmodern Condition”, F. T. Lyotard argues that the logos is a myth with the concept of “sunset of metanarrative” and that the world can only be understood as a fictional story. Postmodernist aesthetics refers to this concept and puts forward the idea that the fictitiousness of a character in a literary work fictionalizes its state and the events in which he participates. In this regard, in the context of the literary work, real space and characters are fictitious. Fictionality realizes in different ways, and we can see this in the analysis of British writer Jasper Fforde’s novels “Thursday Next”.

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**Problem statement.** The aesthetics of postmodernism unequivocally accepts the experiences of previous literary cultures, “reworking” existing literary texts with ironic quotations, parody and fictional play. Ironically, it tries to re-understand existing forms, and comically creates new interpretations of them. For this reason, postmodernist prose in literary criticism perceives quotations, simulations, and traditional literature as a space between parody and “recreating” fiction and reality.

On the other hand, it should be noted that in postmodernist prose fiction acts as the language of metaphor. In such novels, metaphor becomes the language of aesthetics and socio-cultural reality, serving the reader’s communication in the author’s story.

The aesthetics of postmodernism created a special and new type of interpretation, fiction [5]. What distinguishes the postmodernist narrative from the narratives of other pre-existing artistic systems is that it reworks known texts into a textual space between fiction and reality. This was due to the fact that postmodernist literature, bypassing seriousness, preferred irony and satire, claiming the emergence of a new type of investigation between fiction and reality. For this reason, fiction is an important technique in postmodernist novels.

Postmodernist literature could escape the seriousness and responsibility of what is being said by taking advantage of irony and satire in the space of fiction. This was due to the idea that postmodernist aesthetics did not have the appropriate form and content to describe reality and that is why postmodernist writers were not ambitious in describing reality. In this regard, postmodernist writers resorted to postmodernist fiction and parody, and fictionality was realized by fictional play.

The modern British postmodernist novel, especially Jasper Fforde’s series of novels “Thursday Next”, can be seen as the most interesting examples of postmodernist novels, the author’s acceptance of the use of fiction and fictionality.

**Presenting main material.** Modern British writer Jasper Fforde was born on January 11, 1961 in London and spent his childhood and youth in his grandfather’s native Wales. In this regard, the author’s strange-sounding surname Fforde was written according to the rules of the Wall alphabet (a

British group of Celtic languages). From a young age, Jasper Fforde wrote short stories and reworked the tales he read as a child. Later, he added a detective story to children's fairy tales and created new ones. These writings led to the emergence of one of his first literary characters, Thursday Next. According to the writer, his mother played a major role in naming the image Thursday Next. He recalls that his mother often used the word "next Thursday" changing the places of the words. On the other hand, many critics see the phrase as an allusion to Gilbert Chesterton's "The Man Who Was Thursday".

In his work written in the genre of historical fantasy, the author used numerous allusions, metaphors and subtle humor to present a hero named Thursday Next to literature. This character, as the protagonist of the author's series of novels, participates from book to book and creates the series "Thursday Next". The series, written in different years, includes the novels such as "The Eyre Affair" (2001), "Lost in a Good Book" (2002), "The Well of Lost Plots" (2003), "Something Rotten" (2004), "First Among Sequels" (2007), "One of Our Thursday is Missing" (2011) and "The Woman Who Died a Lot" (2012).

Based on the plot of Charlotte Bronte's novel "Jane Eyre", "The Eyre Affair" is about the abduction of the protagonist Jane Eyre and the detective plot that follows the incident. The book is one of the best-selling detective stories in the detective genre in the New York Times, and has won the sympathy of readers since its writing.

The events take place in Wales, and the dogma, which is already part of Britain, is the birthplace of the socialist republic. Russia, meanwhile, has not given up its imperial interests, and the Crimean War has been going on for years. Airships move in the air, short-distance trains run on the ground. The lack of skilled police in the state communications agency has led to an increase in criminal cases. In the magical-fantastic time, vampires and monsters roam and live with humans. Speaking of narrator Thursday Next, the explorer talks about classic English writers, who stand guard over the works of those authors: "Words were his life and his love—he never seemed happier than when he was on the trail of a counterfeit Coleridge or a fake Fielding. It was under Boswell that we arrested the gang who were stealing and selling Samuel Johnson first editions; on another occasion we uncovered an attempt to authenticate a flagrantly unrealistic version of Shakespeare's lost work, *Gardenia*" [4;3].

Thursday Next talks about Shakespeare's family, describes him and other famous writers of English literature, Hershel, where the Bronte sisters also lived, and says that he fought hard enough to protect this place: Such huge numbers of people had created enormous security problems; no one was taking any chances since a deranged individual had broken into Chawton, threatening to destroy all Jane Austen's letters unless his frankly dull and uneven Austen biography was published... In Dublin the following year an organised gang attempted to hold Jonathan Swift's papers to ransom. A protracted siege developed which ended with two of the extortionists shot dead and the destruction of several original political pamphlets and an early draft of *Gulliver's Travels*" [4;15].

As you can see, the magical-fantasy world also includes characters from classical literature, which further enriches the writer's fantasy world. Schoolchildren collect postcards with pictures of the literary heroes of Fielding, Dickens, and Thackeray, and "Shakespeare issue" takes on a new dimension in the literary community - years of controversy result in war.

Thursday Next works in the literary crime department, and unlike his peers, he can also travel to the pages of books. On one of his next trips, she faces the Book World, which is controlled by the Fiction Organization.

Becoming a member of the Great Library, Thursday Next prevents Jane Eyre's fairy-tale heroine Acheron Hades's (Hades - the god of the realm of the dead in Greek mythology, Acheron or Stinks - the name of the river that carries the spirits to the realm of the dead, embodies the terrorist in the work) deeds, the end of the world several times, then marries, frees her husband from the spell of magic, becomes a mother of three children and eventually becomes the hero of her book. Her father is an advocate for Book World, her uncle is the inventor of Mycroft, and her grandmother is an elderly woman nicknamed Pickwick, who once worked at the Great Library.

Apparently, Casper Fforde "transfers" the heroes of the classic novel to his work, making "promotions" that will be of interest to the reader. Among her heroes are the characters from Emily Bronte's novel "Wuthering Heights". Members of the "Catherine's Party" want to kill the protagonist Heathcliff, and the plot continues around his persecution. In *Wuthering Heights*, it is known that Catherine is Heathcliff's childhood friend and beloved. Catherine marries not him, but another childhood friend, Edgar Linton, and Edgar and Heathcliff hate each other so much that pregnant

Catherine becomes physically and mentally ill, loses her mind, and eventually dies. Emily Bronte's book takes on a new dimension in Casper Fforde's novel, and the members of the "Catherine Party" vow to take revenge on Heathcliff.

The other character in the play is Godot, the invisible protagonist of Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot", who is in a state of eternal waiting. The staff of the Great Library waits for Godot throughout the work, hoping for his arrival, but they can't see him until the end.

In the world of the novel created by the author, a special Chronoguard department travels in the time machine to the future as well as the past, scientists resurrect extinct animals, and Thursday Next can fall into the reality described in the books. The writer achieves this with the help of fantastic descriptions and unusual prose, and the author's use of sarcasm, ridicule and satire, which are forms of expression of artistic laughter, plays a special role in revealing the images.

The author's novel "The Well of Lost Plots" [3] is based on the metaphor of the "world library" by Jorge Luis Borges. Referring to Jorge Luis Borges's story "The Library of Babel", J. Fforde creates a world of art called BookWorld, which combines classic works, as in the hypertext of the great Argentine writer. The texts created by J. Fforde do not realize life, as in classical works, but the space of texts, in other words, J. Derrida's concept of "the world as a text".

The complex narrative structure disrupts the linear development of events and, in place of allusion, reminiscence, and within the plot, transforms the text of the new plot into a postmodernist narrative type. As a result of the erasure of memory, Thursday Next loses her memory, forgets the death of her brother, and in this connection the known event in his dreams changes several times and turns into different endings. This part of the novel is reminiscent of Milorad Pavic's "Dictionary of the Khazars", in which the protagonist sees first the death of his wife and as the same episode is repeated, the relatives become alien soldiers and the soldier dies, seeing his brother's death again Thursday Next is now convinced that his wife is alive. The author emphasizes that in the plots of the dream, as in the story of Jorge Luis Borges "The Garden of Forking Paths", different plot lines take place, and all the events are relative. Apparently, the writer "switches" to the plot line of Milorad Pavic and Jorge Luis Borges and uses it.

Then new narrators come to the work and they tell each other the history of L.N. Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina". Thursday Next listens to them with a headset, and when the writer arrives, he creates a special type of text for readers - comments and references, thus blurring the line between reality and the text, between the main text and the comments.

The work ends in an unusual way, and the author thanks Emily Bronte's protagonist Heathcliff for her participation in the novel.

As can be seen, the text is based on the principle of play with reality and opens the way for the plot of a new novel from the contact of real events with the heroes of the book. Book World is home to Dante's Beatrice, Emily Bronte's Heathcliff and Catherine, Charles Dickens's Miss Havisham and Falstaff, and Thursday Next, when she enters the novel written in the book, she lives up to the text. Like women in real life, she misses going to work, getting on the bus, watching movies, because the classics do not reflect the lifestyle of modern woman. However, as she moves from book to book, she meets and interacts with the characters of famous works. Wuthering Heights is revived in the novel by Jasper Fforde, the protagonist of the novel, and realizes the postmodernist saying that "the world is a text" [2].

The real protagonist Thursday Next also analyzes the events of both "The Well of Lost Plots" and the novel written within the novel, and these analyzes sound so convincing that the distance between the book the reader reads and the book written on its pages disappears. The world of books is like reality, and reality is losing its weight and turning into fiction.

The titles of the chapters also informs about the complex plot line of the work. While the "Minotaur" is a journey into Greek mythology and a description of the world of mythical heroes, "Captain Nemo" portrays the novel of Jules Verne, and the events on the "Nautilus" submarine are "transferred" to the modern era, thus stepping with Next. Captain Nemo's books "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" and "The Mysterious Island" take on a new meaning in Jasper Fforde's work, focusing on the problems of the modern world.

The journey into the world of books also compares the reader with the protagonists of John Fawles's "The Magus", Evelyn Waugh's "Decline and Fall", "Vile Bodies", and "Sword of Honor".

In the books, the heroes of the world ask readers' questions and answer them on the spot. Well-known book characters express the problems of the modern world, on the one hand, they voice the pains of the time, and on the other hand, they remind the plot of the fairy tale by leaving their book

period. Thus, the dual situation creates a paradox; the reader both faces the current problems of his time, and travels to the world of fairy tales, sees that he is in contact with the pages of the book. Jasper Fforde's new type of prose also informs him of the irony of postmodern aesthetics, "provoking" the reader to take a sarcastic approach to himself and the events around him.

On the other hand, Jasper Fforde speaks not only about the current problems of the world, but also about its incomprehensible "face". Thus, the idea of "the book is life" is realized by the writer in a unique way, reminiscent of the transition from books to books in the collection of short stories "The Book of Sand" by J.L. Borges. (The protagonist of J.L. Borges's "The Book of Sand" turns the Bible into a magic book and hides it in the pages of "One Thousand and One Nights").

The peculiarity of Jasper Fforde's work embodies the fictionality of postmodernists who take advantage of the principles of fiction and reality. In the work, a group of characters trying to escape the terrible disease that befell Florence is reminiscent of the plot line of Boccaccio's "The Decameron". The reader's new journey to the pages of "The Decameron" is replaced by Kafka's novel "The Trial". The escape plan of one of the heroes results in a lawsuit against him, and this lawsuit "sends" the reader to Kafka's well-known work.

The characters from L.N. Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina", Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", and Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" make the work even more interesting, linking different plot lines based on the reader's intellect.

The fact that the work "walks" between popular literature and intellectual literature indicates that it is addressed to both types of readers. While Jasper Fforde makes popular literature a laughing stock, he hopes to create a new type of reader by turning to intellectual novels. He says this in one of his interviews: "The inspiration comes from everywhere, from what I grew up with. There's so much silliness and nonsense in the world that we regard as normal working procedure. The satirical point of the view may be to counterpoint that. The way we look at classics has been hijacked by the intelligentsia - Shakespeare is highbrow and seen as something clever people do, which isn't right at all. I basically pull inspiration from everywhere ... I'm interested in lots of stuff"[1].

**Conclusions.** Jasper Fforde's works are generally regarded by literary critics as a complex type of narrative. Such an approach is understandable, because the author resorted to numerous allusions, reminiscences and word plays, creating the text within the boundaries of reality and fiction. This message to the intellectual reader is also related to the clear ending of the text. Such an approach leads to numerous interpretations of the reader, reveals not one, but several plot lines of the work, encourages to look at the known texts from a new perspective.

Apparently, Jasper Fforde succeeded in creating a new type of narrative, the postmodernist novel, on the frontiers of fiction and reality, using fictionality, a postmodernist artistic technique, in the "Thursday Next" series of novels.

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